



**ARMY MEDICINE**  
Serving To Heal...Honored To Serve

# Safe Medication Use

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## Patient Teaching Slides



# 3 Ways to Improve Medication Safety

1. Talk to your Doctor or Pharmacist about Your Medications
2. Organize, Store, Secure, and Dispose of Your Medications Safely
3. Be Your Own Medication Use Champ





# Polypharmacy? What's that?

Polypharmacy can be defined in different ways

The most common description is taking many medications every day or multiple medications to treat the same problem.

Is it harmful? Not always, but it could make you more likely to have side effects, adverse drug reactions, or drug interactions.

You should always ask your Doctor to review your medication list if a medication is added or changed.



# Ask Questions

Ask your Doctor or Pharmacist about Your Medications

- What is the name of this medicine? Is that a brand or generic name?
- Why am I taking this medication? How can I tell if it's working?
- How should I take this medication? And for how long?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Will this interact with my other medications including vitamins, herbals or over the counter medications? (Show your LIST)



# Be Safe

## Organize, Store, Secure and Dispose of Your Medications

- Keep a list of all your medications including prescription, over-the-counter, vitamins, herbal remedies, and weight loss products.
- Include the dose, how often you take them and the doctor's name.
- Keep a list of medications that you can't take and include the reason.
- Keep a copy of the list with you and Show it to your Doctor  
(Don't forget to show it to the Dentist, the Pharmacist, and Specialists)
- Keep your medications in their original labeled container.
- Store your medication in a cool dry place unless the label tells you to store in a refrigerator. Don't store them in the bathroom or in the car.
- Make sure your medications are securely stored and out of reach of children and pets.
- Dispose of your unneeded or expired medications safely.



# Be a Medication Use Champion

- Ask questions! Especially if the medication looks different or the instructions have changed.
- If this is the first time you are taking this medicine, ask the pharmacist to show it to you and to describe how to take it.
- Use the same pharmacy system for all your medication needs so that they have a complete medication record.
- Always check your prescriptions before you leave the pharmacy to be sure the medication is for you and that you understand the label.
- Tell your healthcare providers about allergies or other reactions you are having since taking this medication.
- Don't share your medications or borrow from others.
- Don't increase or decrease the dose, take extra doses, skip doses, or stop the medication on your own.



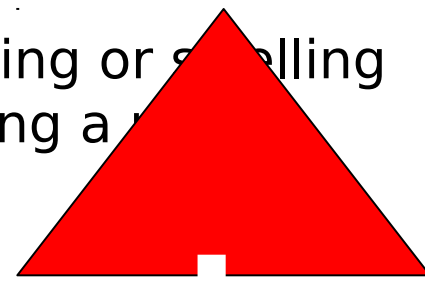
# Need a little help?

- You can always ask the pharmacist questions about your medication. No referral is needed to schedule a medication review appointment.
- We have a medication list form that you can use as a sample to help keep track of your current medications.
- Tell your provider or pharmacist if you're having a hard time taking the medications as instructed. They may be able to make changes or offer tips to make them easier to take regularly.
- Patient information sheets are always available when you fill your prescription. If you want another copy to take home, just ask!



# Special Notes

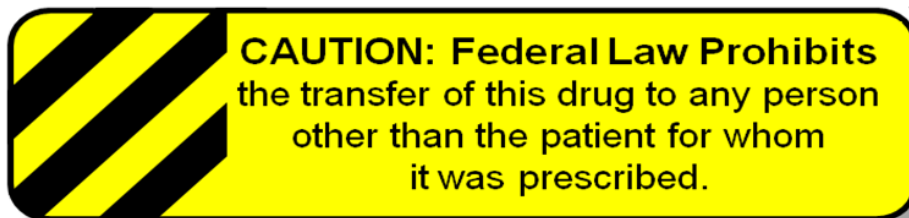
- Controlled substances are medications that require extra safety and security procedures and have limits to the quantity dispensed.
- Examples of controlled substances include some medications for pain, sleep, or anxiety.
- Controlled substances can always be identified by a colored sticker prohibiting transfer to any other person.
- Get medical help right away if you develop itching or swelling or if you are having trouble breathing after taking a medication.







# Security and Disposal



- Your medications were dispensed especially for you – Don't Share.
- If your medications are lost or stolen, make a police report.
- Home disposal is the preferred method for disposal. [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) provides guidance on appropriate disposal in household trash and flushing of certain medications.
- Community Prescription Drug Take Back is an alternative means to dispose of expired or unused medications twice annually.